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**Talking Points Prepared for Delivery by James B. Comey
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Introduction

- I have been FBI Director for 16 months now, and I believe — now, more than ever — that the FBI is an amazing place
- When I spoke to you a year ago, I was still in the “drinking from a fire hose” phase of this job
- The game has slowed down a bit, but I still have a lot to learn
- In the past 16 months, I’ve traveled to all of our FBI field offices and many of our international offices
- I’ve had conversations with many different people, including a lot of you, who have helped me to better understand the issues and concerns of our law enforcement partners
- I’m grateful for those conversations, and I hope they will continue
- Your perspectives make me a better leader and they make the FBI a better organization
- I count on you to offer feedback, constructive criticism, and your thoughts on the issues we all face

- Today, I'd like to talk about the FBI's current priorities, and some of the challenges we face as a law enforcement family

Terrorism

- I have spent a lot of time trying to understand whether the FBI's priorities make sense — and after over a year of looking at it, I think they do
- I believe it still makes sense for counterterrorism to be our top priority
- But the threat has changed in two significant ways since I was last in government
 - **First**, the core al Qaeda tumor in the AfPak region has been reduced
 - But at the same time, that cancer has metastasized
 - The progeny of al Qaeda – groups like AQAP, al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Khorasan, and ISIL – have sprung up like secondary tumors
 - These groups offer terrorism training and experience to people all over the world
 - These misguided people think the way to impart meaning in their lives is to wage jihad
 - The attacks in Paris earlier this month showed once again the deadly extent of this cancer
 - It remains a huge, diverse, and significant threat to us
 - I go to sleep each night and wake up each morning worrying about it

- We are watching foreign fighters and would-be foreign fighters
- We are monitoring and interdicting the travel of those who might want to leave this country and go to Syria
- But groups like ISIL are attracting folks not from a typical demographic
- Our challenge five or six years ago was people going to fight in Somalia with al Shabaab
 - It was fairly easy to identify where they were being attracted from
 - Somali men, typically from the upper Midwest, Minneapolis area
- Today, the people traveling are from all walks of life, ranging in age from 18 to 63
 - These are white people, African-Americans, recent immigrants, even young girls being lured to wed fighters in the caliphate
- The challenge is that those traveling are not from one area or even a physical place — the same mosque or community center
- The recruiting is all happening online
 - Propaganda through Twitter and other social media platforms
- Much more difficult to track
- And while I'm concerned about those going over, I'm even more concerned about those coming back

- We will see a terrorist diaspora out of Syria and Iraq, just as there was out of the Afghanistan war with the Soviet Union in the 1980s
 - You can draw a line between that terrorist diaspora and 9/11
 - We cannot allow a similar line from Syria to a future tragedy
- It's challenging because there are thousands of ways to get from the United States to Syria and there are tens of thousands of Americans who travel for legitimate purposes every single day
- The **second** way the terrorist threat has changed is a result of the explosion of propaganda on the Internet
 - Groups like ISIL have created slick media campaigns to recruit fighters – foreign fighters and homegrown violent extremists alike
 - It's very hard for us to find and stop them before they take action
- That's why our partnerships are so important
- It is highly unlikely to be an FBI Special Agent who first sees a traveler talking about going, or a traveler who has returned
- And it is highly unlikely to be a federal agent who will first see or hear about, in a neighborhood, some troubled soul who appears to be radicalizing on the Internet
- It is far more likely to be a deputy sheriff or police officer on patrol — somebody who knows that neighborhood

- We need to remain tightly connected to each other, through partnerships like Joint Terrorism Task Forces and fusion centers
- [SIR, ANYTHING YOU MIGHT WANT TO REFERENCE COMING OUT OF LAST WEEK'S SVTC?]

Intelligence

- The next priority I want to mention is intelligence
- I inherited from Bob Mueller a national security and law enforcement organization that uses intelligence to prevent, and respond to, both crime and terrorism
- Today's FBI is threat-based and intelligence-driven
- Let me say a word about what that means
- "Intelligence" is simply information relevant to decision-making
- Being threat-based and intelligence-driven means being more thoughtful about what we work and how we do that work
- [WORKING THE INBOX]
- Today, we are constantly involved in a process of trying to understand the threats we face — what's out there, what we see, what might we be missing
- We gather intelligence to help us understand and rank those threats, and we stare hard at what we don't know — the intelligence "gaps" — so we can fill those gaps
- We do this for national security and criminal threats, at the national level and in each field office

- Then we compare the national and local views ... bang them together and reconcile them ... and come up with a threat prioritization ranking for each of our 56 field offices
- In short, we try to look out beyond our inbox to assess what the dangers are, what's being done about them, and, given that and our resources, what we should spend time on
- Part of the reason we do this is so that we can better respond to your needs
- I know that our priorities are not always your priorities
- And where you need us to be in each city may be different
- I hope that you already have a strong working relationship with the Special Agent in Charge in your community
- If you don't, I need to hear about it
- These are my field generals — they need to have a complete picture of what is happening in their communities
- I encourage you to reach out to your SAC — to talk about the issues you're facing, and let us know how we can best help you
- Whatever you're working, whatever your concerns, we want to hear about them so we can help

Going Dark

- Now I want to discuss two issues that are very much on my mind, and that I suspect are on your minds

- One of the biggest challenges we face is that law enforcement has not kept pace with technology — what we call “Going Dark”
- When I left public service in 2005, this problem was blinking off to my periphery
- When I came back in late 2013, it was blinking directly in front of me because of the proliferation of communication modes
- It affects all of us, but perhaps you more than us, given the volume of work you do, and your role in protecting public safety
 - Drunk driving incidents, fatal car crashes, domestic abuse, child exploitation
- Those of us charged with protecting our citizens aren’t always able to access the evidence we need to prosecute crime and prevent terrorism even with lawful authority
- We have the legal authority to intercept and access communications and information pursuant to court order, but we often lack the technical ability to do so
- We face two overlapping challenges
 - Data in motion
 - Data at rest
- And both types of data are increasingly encrypted

- I've been speaking about this subject quite a bit — particularly after Apple and Google announced that their new operating systems would encrypt information on smartphones and other devices by default
- This means the companies themselves won't be able to unlock phones, laptops, and tablets to reveal photos, documents, email, and recordings stored within
- Sophisticated criminals will come to count on these means of evading detection
- It's the equivalent of a closet that can't be opened ... a safe that can't be cracked
- The notion that the marketplace could create something that would prevent that closet from ever being opened, even with a properly obtained court order, makes no sense to me
- I'm deeply concerned about this, and I believe we got here because people fail to understand why we in law enforcement do what we do, and how we do it
- We need to be able to access communications and information to bring people to justice
- And we need to be able to do so quickly and efficiently — when time is of the essence
- We have seen case after case — from homicides and car crashes to drug trafficking and domestic abuse — where critical evidence came from cell phones, hard drives, and online communication

- And unfortunately, we are seeing more and more cases where we believe significant evidence resides on a phone or a laptop, but we can't crack the password
- We will continue to throw every lawful tool we have at this problem, but it's costly, inefficient, and it takes time
 - I wish we had the benefit of time in our line of work; we usually don't
- I also know that you don't have the resources, the personnel, or the technical specialists to handle these issues on an ad hoc basis
- We need a long-term fix, so that we are all on the same page
 - So that communication providers know what is expected of them under the law, and so that we can do the jobs the American people have entrusted us to do, in the way they would want us to do them
- I don't have a perfect solution, but I believe it's time to start the conversation
- And I hope that we can find a way — together — to make sure the American public better understands the work we do, and the lawful means by which we do it

Threats to Law Enforcement

- The second issue I want to discuss is something I know is a passionate concern of everybody in this room — threats to law enforcement

- Our paramount wish as law enforcement leaders is for our people to come home safe at the end of each shift
- We've seen a disturbing increase in shootings and ambush-style attacks against law enforcement officers
- We were all shaken by the killing last month of NYPD Officers Wenjian Liu and Rafael Ramos
- One of the saddest things I do as FBI Director is call the departments of officers killed in the line of duty in our country, to express the FBI's sorrow and offer our support
- I'm making far too many calls
- Attacks on law enforcement personnel aren't a matter of abstract statistics for me or anybody else in the FBI, and I know they aren't for you, either
- The FBI and the Justice Department are doing all we can to understand what's going on, and to offer tools and training and techniques to keep our folks safe
- And we are working side-by-side with you to bring to justice those who would harm our law enforcement officers
- I know there are serious debates taking place in our country today about how our law enforcement personnel relate to the communities they serve, and about the appropriate use of force
- These are important debates, and every American should be free to express an informed opinion on these issues — to protest peacefully, to convey frustration and criticism and even anger in a constructive way
- That's what makes our democracy great

- Those debates and conversations can help us understand everyone's perspectives, and help us in law enforcement to better serve our communities
- What is **never** acceptable is when people cut short those conversations and choose to attack the men and women who serve and protect us
- No matter what anyone thinks about the specific actions or mistakes of a very small number of police officers, targeting police for assassination is not the answer
- We **will not tolerate** such acts in the United States of America — and we will ensure that those who commit these acts are brought swiftly to justice
- When I was at Detective Ramos's funeral in New York, I was struck by something Bill Bratton said
- He talked about finding ways to **see each other** better — for law enforcement to see the communities that we protect better, and for communities to see law enforcement better
- Those are wise words, and I hope that part of that seeing involves an appreciation for just what policing involves
- The citizens of this great country need to really **see** the men and women of law enforcement — see what they see through the windshields of their police cars and on street corners; ride along with them on a late-night shift
- As you already know, what they will see are officers overwhelmingly doing the right thing for the right reasons, and too often operating in communities — and facing challenges — most of us easily drive around

- As we continue these important conversations in our country about the relationship of law enforcement to the communities we serve, I hope we'll all make an effort to see each other better

Conclusion

- I want to thank you again for your service
- We have hard jobs — there's no denying that
- But I can't imagine a group of people I would rather do hard things with than the people in this room
- Thank you for everything you do to keep our country safe
- The FBI is proud to have you as our partners
- Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today

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